



Is a Catholic Saved or Should S/He Consider Becoming a Christian?

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Although talking about religions may seem offensive, our intention has never been to promote or diminish institutions, but to speak God's truth to those who are hungry for something more in life. As you delve deeper into the difference between Catholicism and Christianity, you will hopefully evaluate whether your faith matches what the Bible describes.

First of all, the question of whether Catholics are saved or not cannot be answered with a simple yes or no, because one is never saved by belonging to a certain religious group. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone ([Ephesians 2:8–9](#)). There is not a single Christian denomination in which every member has truly personally trusted in Christ as Savior. Even within the same denomination, not all members may adhere to the same beliefs or observe the same practices. So, this question has a lot to do with becoming religious vs becoming a Christian. However, Catholics adhering to the official beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic Church can be described as far removed from biblical Christians.

Catholicism, although describing itself as a Christian religion, differs from Christianity in many ways, including but not limited to its view of the Bible, its teachings about salvation and ways to approach God. While Christians believe the Bible as God's inerrant Word, with the supreme authority for faith and life ([Proverbs 30:5-6](#); [Isaiah 8:20](#); [John 10:35](#); [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)), Catholics view the Bible as having equal authority with the Church and tradition. Christians do not deny the value of Church traditions, but for a Church tradition to be valid, it must be based on the clear teaching of Scripture and must be in full agreement with Scripture.

Concerning the view of salvation, which constitutes a very critical differentiating factor, the Bible teaches us that salvation is obtained by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone ([Ephesians 2:8–9](#)). On the contrary, the Catholic view is that salvation is obtained by faith but must then be "maintained" by good works and participation in the sacraments. In fact, one must have good works and observe the rituals of Roman Catholicism to be saved. This process of salvation from the Catholic perspective is very difficult because a Catholic must first believe in Christ, be baptized according to the Trinitarian formula, be infused with additional grace by observing the Catholic sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and then die without any unconfessed mortal sin. Even after fulfilling the above conditions, one is assured of entering heaven, after another period of purification in [purgatory](#).

The above Catholic view of salvation is completely different from what the Bible teaches. In the Christian view and thus the biblical standpoint, Salvation is God's grace/gift ([Ephesians 2:8–9](#); [2 Corinthians 5:18-21](#)) and can be received through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and His atonement for our sins ([John 3:16](#); [Ephesians 2:8](#), [Hebrews 11:1](#)). Once one receives Christ as Savior, one is justified ([Romans 5:9](#)), delivered from the bondage of sin ([1 Peter 1:18](#)), reconciled to God ([Romans 5:1](#)), sanctified ([1 Corinthians 6:11](#)) and born again as a new creature ([1 Peter 1:23](#); [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). In fact, salvation is both an accomplished status and a process. All the above are realized at the moment of salvation, but Christians, having been born of the Holy Spirit, can now practically live out what is already positionally true. In this case, good works are results of salvation or indeed the fruit of the Holy Spirit living in Christians ([Galatians 5: 22-23](#)) and not a requirement for salvation or a means of maintaining salvation ([Titus 3:5](#)). Moreover, to say that we must atone for our sins through purification in Purgatory is to deny the sufficiency of Jesus' atoning sacrifice. Jesus' sacrifice was fully, completely, and perfectly sufficient ([1 John 2:2](#), [5:13](#)). Christ's sacrifice was offered once for all and doesn't need to be reoffered ([Hebrews 7:27](#), [10:10](#); [1 Peter 3:18](#)).

Last but not least, Catholicism differs from Christianity in its view of how we approach God. Catholics tend to approach God through intermediaries, such as Mary or the saints. Christians approach God directly, offering prayers to no one other than God Himself. Catholics view Mary and the saints as “*intercessors*” before God. They believe that a saint, glorified in heaven, has been perfected in love and has "more direct access" to God than earthly sinners, therefore prayers delivered by a saint are more effective than our direct prayers to God. This concept is blatantly unbiblical. [Hebrews 4:16](#) tells us that believers here on earth have direct access to God and can “*approach the throne of grace with confidence*”. The Bible teaches us that only Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit intercede for us with the Father ([Hebrews 7:25](#); [Romans 8:26–27](#)). If the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity already intercede for us with the Father, it is almost unthinkable that anyone would want a human (or angel) in heaven to intercede for them. Moreover, [1 Timothy 2:5](#) teaches us that Jesus is the only mediator between man and God, so Mary and saints cannot take Jesus place. Before the completion of Christ's work on the cross, God's people were represented before God by priests. However, when Jesus died, “*the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom*” ([Mark 15:38](#)). Believers in Christ in New Testament times are themselves priests ([Revelation 1:6](#)), and our high priest is Jesus Christ ([Hebrews 4:14](#)). As children of God, believers have direct access to God in Jesus name. Jesus Himself taught believers to pray directly to God ([Matthew 6:9](#)) and He mentioned that prayers should be offered in His name alone ([John 14:13-14](#)). We are also assured that God hears us when we pray ([1 John 5:14](#)). It is therefore clear that whether one prays to Mary and/or the saints, or asks them for their prayers, neither practice is biblical.

In all, based on explanations provided above, the answer to title question depends! it is important to note that not all Catholics hold to the Roman Catholic understanding of salvation. There are Catholics who believe in the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. They may not understand that the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is something very different, but they truly observe the sacraments as an aspect of spiritual growth and not in an attempt to earn salvation. So, the answer as to whether Catholics are saved or will go to heaven depends. If the question was “*are there saved Catholics?*” then the answer is “yes.” But if the question was “*is a person holding to the official Catholic concept of salvation saved?*” the answer is “no.” So, it is true that many Catholics should consider obtaining salvation and becoming true Christians. For a Catholic to become a Christian, the above points (among many other aspects) must be corrected. If you are Catholic and desire direct access to the God who loves you and assurance of salvation, please receive this gift through faith in Christ ([Hebrews 2:3](#); [Romans 5:1](#)). This is the salvation that Jesus died to provide, and that God offers as a gift.

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